

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 00965 101304Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 101220Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4626
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0965

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GY
SUBJECT: FOLLOW UP ON BURNHAM'S MAY DAY PROMISES

REF: GEORGETOWN 0942

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM'S MAY DAY SPEECH WAS THE KICK-OFF FOR A BUSY WEEK OF POLITICKING AND MEETINGS. FOLLOWING UP ON PROMISES, BURNHAM MADE AN EIGHT-HOUR VISIT TO SEVERAL EAST INDIAN SUGAR AREAS TO MEET WITH WORKERS AND LISTEN TO GRIEVANCES. HE ALSO ADDRESSED A GUYANA NATIONAL SERVICE (GNS) SEMINAR, CONCENTRATING AGAIN ON THE NEED TO INCREASE WORKER PRODUCTIVITY, IN TANDEM WITH IMPROVEMENT OF WORKERS' ECONOMIC STATUS. HE ALSO FULFILLED PROMISE TO HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING OF GUYSTAC'S BOARD TO CONSIDER MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE WORKERS' HARSHIPS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THESE MEETINGS AND VISITS ARE THE BEGINNING OF NATION-WIDE TRIPS BY BURNHAM TO TALK DIRECTLY WITH INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL GROUPS OF GUYANESE. END SUMMARY.

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1. CHRONICLE OF MAY 7 FEATURED FRONT-PAGE PHOTOS OF BURNHAM AMIDST CROWD OF EAST INDIANS AND REPORTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD INITIATED SERIES OF MEET-THE-PEOPLE TOURS WITH AN EIGHT-HOUR VISIT TO EAST INDIAN AREA OF WESTERN BERBICE. BURNHAM REPORTEDLY TOLD SUGAR WORKERS AT THREE ESTATES THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO MAKE FIRSTHAND EXAMINATION BECAUSE HE DID NOT ALWAYS GET

ACCURATE INFORMATION FROM HIS OFFICE. ALONG WITH PROMISES OF BENEFITS TO WORKERS, HE EMPHASIZED THAT PRODUCTION MUST RISE ALONG WITH BENEFITS. BURNHAM INDICATED THAT WORK WOULD START IMMEDIATELY ON SEVERAL PROJECTS SUCH AS A DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION SCHEME AND ROAD REPAIRS AND ANNOUNCED THAT A COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL AND TEXTIEL MILL WILL BE CONSTRUCTED IN BERBICE. HE REITERATED THAT EAST INDIAN SUGAR WORKERS WILL RECEIVE HOUSE LOTS FOR TOKEN SUM OF G\$1 AND REVEALED THAT A COMMITTEE IS EXAMINING QUESTION OF REMOVAL OF SUGAR LEVY. RETURNING TO CRITICISM OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS VOICED IN MAY DAY SPEECH, BURNHAM TOLD WORKERS THAT THEY SHOULD INFORM HIM DIRECTLY IF OFFICIALS DO NOT FULFILL THEIR DUTIES.

2. ACCORDING TO CHRONICLE, IN SPEECH TO A POLITICAL EDUCATION SEMINAR OF GNS, BURNHAM AGAIN CALLED FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND EXHORTED WORKERS TO PLACE INTERESTS OF STATE ABOVE INDIVIDUAL. USING RHETORIC SIMILAR TO MAY DAY SPEECH, HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF OVERCOMING LEGACY OF CAPITALISM (I.E. LAZINESS) AND OF CHANGING ATTITUDES TO PROMOTE GENERAL WELFARE. BURNHAM COMPLIMENTED GNS FOR HELPING DEVELOP GUYANA'S COTTON AND SAWMILL INDUSTRIES, BUT CRITICIZED GNS MEMBERS WHO LACK DISCIPLINE.

3. CHRONICLE ALSO REPORTED THAT BURNHAM HELD FOUR-HOUR MEETING OF GUYSTAC BOARD TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC SITUATION AND TAKE UP HIS MAY DAY PROPOSALS TO STANDARDIZE WAGES, SALARIES AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN PUBLIC SECTOR.

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4. COMMENT: BURNHAM'S INCREASED ACTIVITY SEEMS TO BE DIRECT RESPONSE TO GUYANA AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' UNION (GAWU) CHALLENGE MADE AT MAY DAY RALLY AND TO GROWING WORKER UNREST. MEASURES TAKEN ARE COSMETIC AND IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO FIND EVEN LIMITED FUNDS NEEDED TO FULFILL PROMISES BURNHAM MADE TO SUGAR WORKERS DURING HIS VISIT TO BERBICE. BURNHAM'S HECTIC ROUND OF ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK DESPITE DOCTORS' ORDERS THAT HE CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN SLOW PACE MAY BE INDICATION OF SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH HE REGARDS SITUATION. IN CHRONICLE PHOTOS, BURNHAM LOOKED ROBUST, BUT HE CONCEDED TO WORKERS THAT HE HAD BEEN ORDERED TO TAKE THINGS EASIER THAN HE HAD BEFORE.

5. ASIDE FROM BELT-TIGHTENING MEASURES, IT APPEARS THAT GOG CANNOT IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO DEAL WITH WORKERS' DEMANDS AND ECONOMIC SITUATION WITHOUT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. MEANWHILE, BURNHAM IS APPARENTLY RELYING ON

HIS PERSONAL CHARISMA TO PLACATE DISGRUNTED PUBLIC
AND IS PLACING BLAME FOR DIFFICULTIES ON INEPT PUBLIC
OFFICIALS AND VAGUE SINISTER FORCES AT HOME AND ABROAD.
BLACKEN

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Message Attributes

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